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CHALLENGE

FIGHT FOR COMMUNISM · LUCHE POR EL COMUNISMO · PLP

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CARAVAN AGAINST RACIST INCARCERATION

CHICAGO, April 7—Progressive Labor Party (PLP) joined forces with over one hundred antiracist workers for a caravan protest outside of Cook County Jail. Workers are demanding that the Democrat bosses of Chicago free incarcerated workers who are being exposed to COVID-19 at an alarming rate. The liberal misleadership of Chicago now has the blood of three incarcerated workers who have died from COVID-19 at Cook County Jail on their hands.

The disgusting and racist conditions inside of the jail, where incarcerated workers can't physically distance themselves in the overcrowded facility, have turned it into the number one hotspot in the country for the spread of Covid-19. The population of the jail, mostly Black and Latin workers—many detained for non-violent offenses or being unable to make bail—is the direct result of decades of racist policy by the city's liberal bosses, and the racist nature of incarceration and capitalism overall.

Capitalism's only answer for billions of the world's workers is to lock us up and let many of us die. The liberal capitalist bosses will never solve the problems they created. As they lie, incarcerate and look after their businesses, it is workers everywhere that are putting their lives at risk for each other. That's a glimpse of a communist society and workers' power, the only way we can gain any real safety from racist incarceration and deadly pandemics.

Antiracists in a caravan

An hour before the caravan was scheduled to begin, we met in a nearby grocery store parking lot to prepare. Along with members of a pro-working class organization, we collectively made a plan on the route we would take and who would be contact persons if our vehicles got separated or if the racist cops started to make any arrests.We also decorated our vehicles with antiracist signs and revolutionary messages in English and Spanish, such as "Racism Means Fight Back!" and "Communism is the Cure." We distributed surgical and N95 masks to those who needed them, while others provided water. Most importantly, we distributed out CHALLENGE to arm our class about the racist nature of the pandemic and the importance of a fighting back.

When we arrived in front of the jail, there were already dozens of vehicles with fighters from other organizations, circling in front of the racist concentration camp. Everyone was blowing their horns, and some were giving speeches from megaphones inside their cars. Others even braved to get on foot to wave antiracist signs to workers and get out fliers.

The cops were caught off guard and unable to stop the flow of workers' power and block our message. We must keep finding creative ways like this physically distant protest to put the bosses on blast in front of other workers. This makes it harder and harder for them to keep hiding the racist time bomb of infection that exists right now in all jails.

Liberal bosses filled jails, won't empty them

The racist, unhealthy conditions at Cook County Jail have been long in the making. The jail is the largest single-site jail in the United States, keeping anywhere from 4000 to 5000 workers locked up daily. It is also one of the largest mental health facilities in the country, with at least a third of the incarcerated workers diagnosed with a mental illness (Mother Jones, 1/8/19). Many of these workers were incarcerated after former Mayor Rahm Emanuel (formerly Obama's Chief of Staff) led the charge to close half the city's mental health clinics in 2012.

With at least 350 cases of Covid-19 traced back to the jail, it's the largest known source of infections in the U.S. (NYT, 4/8). Currently at least 300 incarcerated workers and over 200 jail staff have tested positive, with at least three confirmed deaths (NBC Chicago, 4/12). Even worse, the city just filed a suit to actively block steps toward decarceration that would save lives (chicagobond.org).

Many well-intentioned organizers in the city got behind Black State's Attorney Kim Foxx in her campaign to get elected on a platform of criminal justice reform, but predictably she has done little. She is following new racist Mayor Lori Lightfoot claiming to represent "change" in the city but in fact representing the same liberal status quo that is guaranteeing Black and Latin workers suffer most during this pandemic.

Abolish racist incarceration with communism

Capitalism can never provide for all of the world's workers, so it has to resort to incarceration for social control and a way to super-exploit workers for labor. These attacks fall hardest on Black and Latin workers, who make up the majority of the two million-plus inmates locked up in this racist country.

As communists, our goal is to smash this profit system and racist incarceration completely. Workers around the world will be rehabilitated, not incarcerated, and we will prioritize the public health of the masses at all costs. A communist future is the healthiest future to fight for! Join PLP!✪

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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OUR FIGHT

☆Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

☆The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

☆Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

☆While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

☆Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

☆Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

☆Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.

☆Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

☆Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

☆Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Covid-19 exacerbates rulers' racism

Covid-19 has laid bare the lethal racist inequalities of the profit system. From the United States to Africa, from Latin America to South Asia, workers everywhere are suffering unnatural deaths from the disease of capitalism. The choice between capitalist decay and an international communist future has never been clearer.

Viruses are a product of nature, but the disaster of Covid-19 is anything but natural. Capitalism depends on the superexploitation of Black, Latin, and undocumented workers as its lifeblood. Those of us who have the least under this system will always endure the harshest attacks. The latest pandemic has made this fact of capitalist life only more obvious.

From refugee camps to tent cities to underfunded housing projects, hundreds of millions work and live without the basics of sanitation or healthcare. We expect that Covid-19 will ultimately pass, but capitalism will remain to sicken us by the billions. Racist inequality is instrumental in cultivating the conditions for spreading disease. Inferior for-profit healthcare, shoddy housing, starvation-level wages—all conspire to put workers, and especially Black and Latin families, in danger.

The capitalist rulers have infected the world with their anarchy, greed, and cold-blooded disregard for human life. The only vaccine is communist revolution! Progressive Labor Party seeks to eradicate the bosses' contagion for all time. Though small, we still have the power to organize workers to fight for pro-communist ideas and practices through mass organizations. In this challenging, difficult period, we still have the capacity to inspire revolutionary optimism (see page 1 through 6). The health and well-being of our class depends on it.

U.S. capitalism kkkills

Jim Crow racism murders our class—through higher unemployment, police terror, deportations, decrepit housing, food deserts, second-class healthcare, homelessness, and slum living conditions. Capitalist inequalities, poverty, and segregation kill nearly 900,000 workers per year (American Journal of Public Health, August 2011). These are the preexisting conditions, fostered by Democrats and Republicans alike, that pave the way for transmission, infection, and death in a pandemic.

Disproportionate numbers of people dying—in hospitals or at home—are working-class Black, Latin, and undocumented workers. While Black workers make up only 30 percent of Chicago's population, they total a stark 70 percent of deaths by Covid-19. "Counties that are majority-black have three times the rate of infections and almost six times the rate of deaths as counties where white residents are in the majority" (Washington Post, 4/7). The bosses' solution? U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams, one of a handful of Black sellouts in the Donald Trump administration, scolded Black, Latin, and other workers to "step up" and "avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs" for "your abuela, your Big Mama" (The Root, 4/10). Such racist trash! These shameless hypocrites jumped at their first chance to blame the victims.

This wouldn't be the first time that Black workers were left to fend for themselves. During the Spanish Flu of 1918, which killed 25 million people worldwide in its first 25 weeks, the racist system refused to report Black workers' illnesses or even dig their graves. The racist pseudoscience of the day claimed that the lining of Black workers' noses "made them more resistant to microorganisms" (Washington Post, 4/11). Black and Latin workers were forced to carry the disease to their jobs and on public transportation and back to their families. A century later, little has changed.

Workers are now faced with impossible choices: infections at our workplaces; nightmares that await us at slaughterhouse hospitals; hunger and lonely deaths at our homes. More than 16 million U.S. workers filed for unemployment between March 15 and April 4 (Business Insider, 4/13). Whether or not Black workers are masked for our collective protection, the racist cops have found a new reason to target them in stores, streets, and train stations (New York Times, 4/14).

New York City is the global pandemic epicenter, with an official death toll exceeding 10,000. But that hasn't stopped liberal racist Governor Andrew Cuomo—who cost thousands of those lives by delaying stay-at-home measures (see page 5)—from congratulating himself for achieving a "possible plateau" (Reuters, 4/7). In reality, any slowing of the official infection rate may reflect a rising threshold for hospital admissions, the widespread unavailability of testing, and workers' reluctance to trust the Nazi bosses' rationed health care. The actual caseload may still be on an upward trajectory and out of control.

Yet, we fight. Workers in Chicago are leading the way (see pages 1 and 3).

Still, it is a lot worse for us in Haiti, Brazil, Zambia, or India.

Covid-19 accelerates fascism and imperialist war

Already sharpening inter-imperialist rivalry—amid ebbing U.S. dominance and the rise of China—will be brought to a boil by Covid-19. Big Fascist war criminal Richard Haass, a leading spokesperson for U.S. finance capital, writes in Foreign Affairs (4/7):

> *T]he world that will emerge from the crisis will be recognizable. Waning American leadership, faltering global cooperation, great-power discord: all of these characterized the international environment before the appearance of COVID-19, and the pandemic has brought them into sharper-than-ever relief. They are likely to be even more prominent features of the world that follows.*

In other words, conditions are ripe for fascism and world war. The U.S. military called for $20.1 billion to counter China because "many in the military believe tensions between the United States and China are likely to grow amid the pandemic" (NYT, 4/5).

Even if liberal racist dimwit Joe Biden beats Trump and becomes president, he will be helpless to turn the tide of U.S. decline. For the working class, the current crisis of capitalism is an opportunity for organizing and communist revolution.

Africa: anarchy of production

The entire nation of South Sudan has four ventilators. This racist system revolves around profit and competition, and the wealthiest imperialist nations are winning. "Scientists in Africa and Latin America have been told by manufacturers that orders for vital testing kits cannot be filled for months, because the supply...is going to America or Europe. [There are] steep price increases, from testing kits to masks" (NYT, 4/9). Racist borders and nationalist ideas have never been more deadly.

In Kenya and Mozambique, police beat, whipped, humiliated, and even killed workers, including a 13-year-old boy, in attempts to enforce lockdowns (Foreign Policy, 4/2). In a panicked stampede for food, two women died on a distribution line (Citizen Digital, 4/11).

African migrant workers in China are targets of eviction, street harassment, and refusal of service (Quartz, 3/11). Anti-Black racism is a global disease.

Whether we are fighting the sickness of capitalism or a coronavirus, our principle is the same: An injury to one is an injury to all. It is in the interest of the whole working class for treatment and supplies to be channeled to the most vulnerable areas. But under the profit system, only the wealthy and connected are guaranteed to be tested and to receive timely care.

Yet, we must fight back. Now more than ever, we need the leadership of Black workers.

Latin America: cardboard coffins and refugees

In Ecuador, where bodies are being left in the street or deposited in cardboard coffins (Guardian, 4/5), desperate conditions are a harbinger for Latin America and the Caribbean: an austerity budget, dependence on a failing U.S. economy, a skeletal healthcare system, gross income inequalities. The situation is even worse for malnourished and devastated Venezuelan immigrants, on the run from the atrocity of Trump's sanctions.

In the Corridor of Violence (Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala), "These violent cartels and their private armies, which in many places exercise more power than national governments, may now fall into anarchic and murderous competition over dwindling re-

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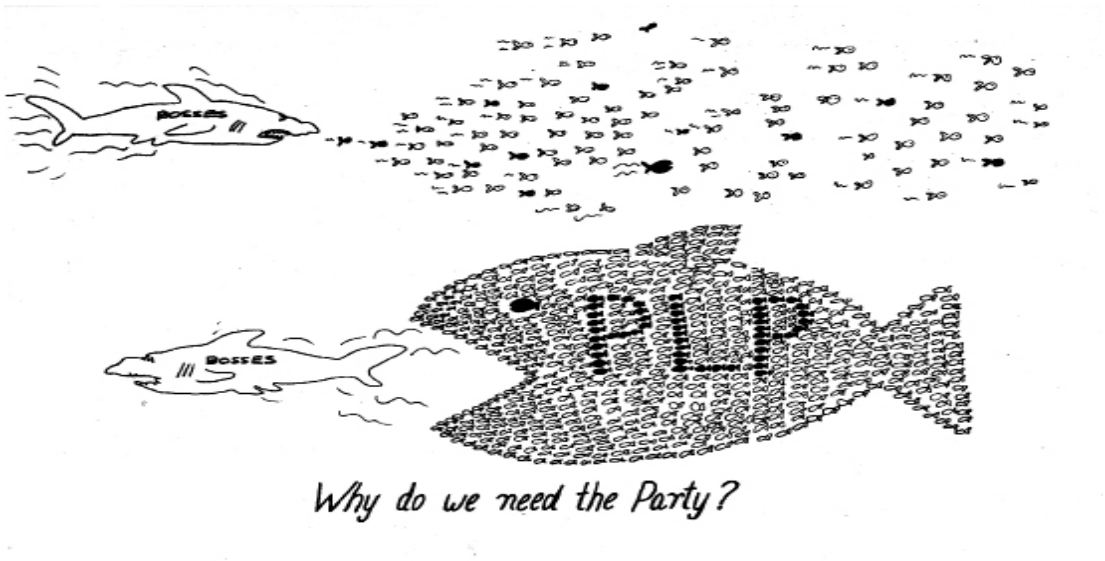
Amazon: Walkout against sick working conditions



CHICAGO, April 4—A group of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) comrades enthusiastically rallied with Amazon workers who organized another walkout at a distribution center on the city's southwest side today. The distribution workers here are connecting with similar actions at Amazon facilities across the country, from Seattle to New York. They are protesting the criminal neglect of their billionaire bosses who have largely failed to provide basic sanitation and protection against coronavirus in their overcrowded centers.

As the capitalist economic system begins to feel the damage from Covid-19, we can only expect that the bosses are going to throw us workers more and more into harm's way in order to protect their profits. That is, unless we continue to organize to fight back and make immediate demands to protect ourselves, our loved ones, and the entire working class.

These immediate demands are necessary, and will definitely save workers' lives. But as long as capitalism remains in place, profits will always come before workers' safety. Also, like all things under capitalism, these attacks will take on a racist essence, harming Black, Latin, Asian and immigrant workers the worst.

The bloodsucking capitalists have no real plan to protect us. It's essential that we continue to build the growing fightback happening across the world, boldly advocating for international, multiracial working-class unity and communist politics. Only communist revolution led by a mass PLP will guarantee safety for the world's workers from pandemics, unemployment, racism, and war.

Honk for workers' power

Today's action started at dawn. At least two dozen cars lined up in a nearby parking lot, and at the designated time, we drove over to the Amazon distribution center. Our caravan came upon at least a dozen multi-racial Amazon workers already leading a picket near one of the facility's front entrances.

All the drivers inside their vehicles enthusiastically honked in support of the workers on the picket, making laps throughout the sprawling parking lots around the facility. Many drivers had signs in their windows, such as "Capitalism Kills" and "Workers' Power." Others rolled down their windows and used bullhorns to join the chants on the front lines.

Not more than fifteen minutes after starting our solidarity caravan we got some unwanted company from the local racists-in-blue, the Chicago Police Department (CPD). The cops immediately started flashing their lights and blocking the path of the driving cars. They began to create bottlenecks and prevented any more cars from driving in the narrow streets leading into the facility.

Although capitalist propaganda likes to push the myth that the cops exist to "protect and serve" workers, the reality is far different. Their main function is social control and to protect the capitalist bosses' property and profits. While serving this role, they commit all sorts of racist violence, gunning down hundreds of workers every year, the majority of those killed in the U.S. being Black and Latin. It's only fitting that they be here during this pandemic, protecting the profits of one of the wealthiest companies in the history of the world.

...Shut it down! Clean it up!'

Although the killer cops had effectively shut down the caravan, we weren't about to let this derail our efforts to support the brave Amazon workers. We simply parked, walked up to their picket and joined their ranks. Wearing masks and maintaining safe physical distances, we joined in chants of "Shut it Down! Clean it Up!" referring to the demand of the workers that Amazon shut down the facility long enough to deeply sanitize all equipment after confirmed Covid-19 cases.

Many of the delivery workers, who were not officially a part of the walkout, soon came out to support. It was clear that they were inspired at the sight of their co-workers' action, and the fact that the bosses had been caught off guard. We quickly got out over 20 CHALLENGEs and had some good conversations before the cops dispersed the rally.

Amazon, world-class exploiters

Amazon can serve as the poster child for the injustice of capitalism. Its CEO and founder, Jeff Bezos, is worth over $100 billion dollars, the richest man on the planet. Through tax loopholes, the company paid nothing in federal taxes in 2018 despite having profits of more than $11 billion that year (CNBC, 4/4/19).

Even with such obscene amounts of wealth gained from our labor, this massive corporation cannot be bothered to suspend operations even for a brief period to disinfect facilities after more and more workers turn up positive for Covid-19. But workers are obviously fighting back nationwide, even in the face of harassment, disinformation, and retaliation from the bosses (Buzzfeed News, 3/31).

Capitalism is a sick system

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to unfold, millions more workers are bound to grasp more deeply the murderous nature of this capitalist profit system. As communists, we need to find more ways to safely connect with workers during the crisis and offer the revolutionary leadership needed to win them away from this deadly sick system, and instead to our collective liberation through an international, revolutionary, communist Progressive Labor Party.✪

Bosses Leave students behind, workers organize

LOS ANGELES, April 10—When the threat of the spreading coronavirus forced the closing of schools in Los Angeles, students and teachers at the charter network where I work, which serves 11,000 students, received a lesson in how little capitalist education has to offer working class children. Having no plan for a shutdown, which was expected to last four weeks, administrators decided to give each student one novel and tell them to visit Khan Academy (a tutoring website) to practice math. This was their BIG plan.

As the gravity of this world-wide crisis began to hit us more and more every day, the management of this charter network from assistant principals all the way up to the chief academic officer were silent. While other districts in the nation were rolling out distance-learning plans, the "leadership" at Green Dot charter school was missing in action.

We could not stand for this, because our students deserve more! I contacted as many teachers as I could via text (about two-thirds2/3 of the staff) and asked others to help with reaching those for whom I did not have phone numbers. We all agreed we could serve our students better than the misleaders ever could and began to create a plan.

One teacher got us all linked in on a communication app to make planning easier. Another teacher created a survey to get information from students about how they were feeling, what they or their families needed, what workload they felt they could balance with other family responsibilities, and what access to technology they had. A third teacher created a spreadsheet where we could enter this school-wide data. Departments collaborated on what streamlined learning plans could look like and everything was consolidated to one sheet where students would have easy access to assignments and Zoom links for obtaining support from their teachers.

We did this in a matter of one week! By week two, teachers were on Zoom connecting with students. Meanwhile, we started to receive emails from management bragging about giving students breakfast and lunch. They were sure to note though, this would take place only during regular school days. For the 2-week spring break, students would have to find food elsewhere. Not only were they not nourishing students' brains, now they were cutting off nourishment to their bodies as well.

By week three of the school closures, it became clear that schools would not reopen after four weeks as initially thought. Now suddenly, the phonies that run Green Dot decided to create a plan for distance learning. This plan was made without any consultation with students, their families, teachers or even the administrators at the school sites. It was completely top down and of course did not consider any of the real concerns that people are facing during this crisis.

Green Dot is at the forefront of liberal talk on education. They have colonized the language of the left like "equity" and "systemic racism" and use it to fool our class sisters and brothers into thinking that they are invested in educating working class youth. A small peak under the surface shows otherwise. I have spent the last five years raising that veil for teachers, students and parents around the district and that effort is making inroads for the growth of Progressive Labor Party and the fight for communism.

Green Dot claims to have opened in order to provide technology access to youth in South Central, but 20 years later they are still not one-to-one with Chromebooks, and the hypocrisy shines through. Every year class sizes have increased and students fall further behind because of the lack of needed support. Then teachers are blamed instead of poorer conditions, and mandated curricula are rolled in to fix all the "horrible teachers".

But students, parents and teachers are not fooled. They understand that no matter the game Green Dot talks, neither they nor any other school district intends to fully educate the working class. Party members must be there to offer an alternative or else that realization just turns to cynicism. When invested in long term organizing in a school district, we can expose the liberal administrators and politicians as the main danger to our class and fight for communist consciousness among our base.

Organizing a distance-learning plan at one school might seem like a small step. But it demonstrates to the working class that our class can run society, from the schools to other workplaces to the government. We can't rely on the Democrat misleaders. We know what our class needs, and we can truly provide it. This builds confidence in ourselves and in our class, and that is a step towards communism!✪

Haiti: Workers confront politician's racist disregard

HAITI, April 9—The Progressive Labor Party (PLP) is at the center of efforts to deal with the coronavirus in general, in the Southern region and one provincial town in particular. We are giving political and tactical leadership.

As of this week, there are 60 officially confirmed cases of coronavirus and two deaths. There is virtually no testing, and little equipment to deal with the eventual surge of the pandemic here. All of the underlying health issues that affect Black workers around the world exist here as well, and we can expect the infection rate and death toll to be catastrophic.

We began on March 1, by calling together the working class population of our town to talk about the coronavirus, what we knew about the disease and methods of protecting ourselves and our friends and families. We discussed some positive steps that we could take, such as having a roving sound-truck that reached out to the rural communities surrounding our town.

The Progressive Labor Party is a principal actor in an ad hoc coronavirus committee in the department. We are able to influence its members, politically and ideologically, so that we can understand why the virus will have such a devastating effect here. It has become increasingly clear to many that the answers given by the rulers both nationally and locally are unequal to the task at hand.

Who organizes society?

The capitalists and their lying politicians are trying to pull the wool over people's eyes, crying all the way to the bank, "Woe, woe, 'we' are a poor country, what can we do?" They rely on rumor and lies to say that "we are all in this together," while they can shelter in mansions with generators and swimming pools, and freezers filled with food.

We point out the difference between the way the capitalist bosses organize society—stealing the value that workers produce so that profits come before people, racism and poverty come before health—and the way that a communist egalitarian society would function—based on the concept of the working class deciding how to share equitably the product of our labor so that all of our needs are met.

Some members of the ad hoc committee are by and large anti-capitalist, but believe that the ills of capitalism can be reformed. But we are willing to engage in ideological struggle while we fight against the rulers' inability and unwillingness to provide the kind of health care that workers need. We are providing needed information to those who otherwise have no access to sound ideas about how to protect themselves during the pandemic.

Ad hoc committee advocates for workers

The ad hoc committee produced a number of documents and proposals that have been offered to the local administration but to no avail. A delegation confronted the principal mayor of the department, demanding that he do something to protect the population, even threatening to take him to court for his failures and charging him with criminal negligence. The threat forced him to relent a little and he has signed a call—which we had to write for him—for physical distancing and regular hand washing.

The committee is currently organizing a collective fundraising to put public hand-washing stations with clean water and soap. We have reached out to Haitians living abroad and other friends, pointing out that if the government refuses to do what is necessary, we will take care of our class collectively.

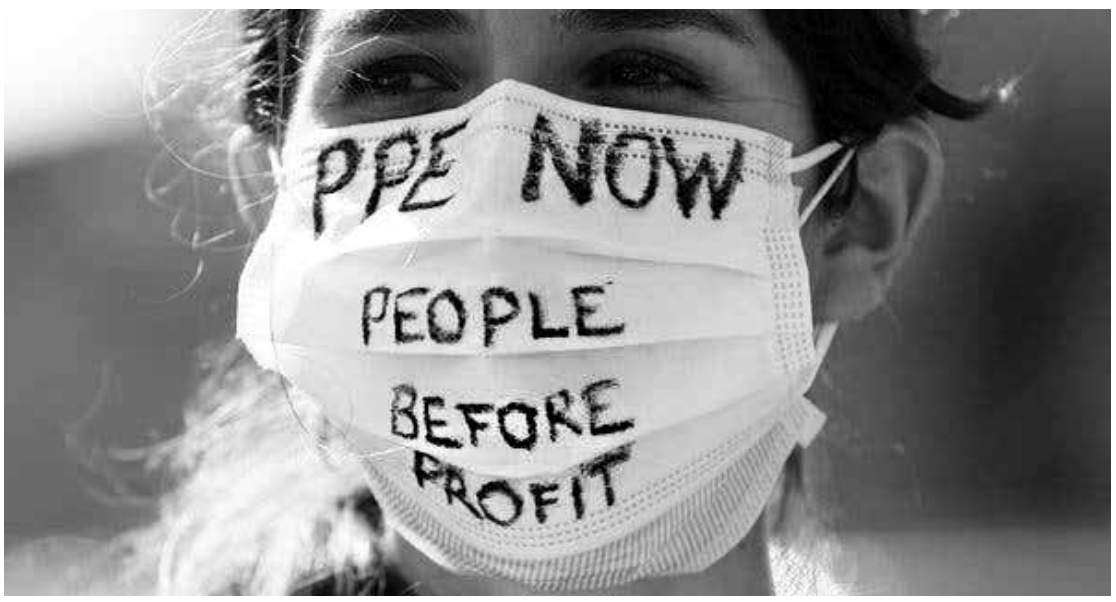
We are continuing solidarity outreach to the rural sections with the sound truck. In an effort to broaden out this work, a number of people have pre-recorded comments about the political and social situation to be broadcast, and friends are donating money for gasoline, etc. We are stopping for mini-conferences in each area to engage the workers there, giving them the opportunity to speak their minds about the lack of response of the bosses to the pandemic.

PLP is at the forefront of this struggle against capitalism in general and its murderous healthcare. Our analysis has many people nodding in agreement, with all or with part, and wanting to take part in this struggle on many levels.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our class solidarity with the workers of the world who are facing, and will face, untold suffering and death because of the inability of capitalism to provide decent healthcare for them.

We have an opportunity to sharpen the class struggle and build the Party. We are discussing with our friends what form our May Day activities should take this year. It is imperative that the Party has a presence.✪

Editorial: Covid-19 exposes rulers' racism



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sources" (Wall Street Journal, 4/6). Our class will soon see a wave of Covid-19 refugees. It will be up to us to respond with international solidarity.

As of April 13, more than 300 workers in Mexico have officially died due to Covid-19, though testing is so limited that the real count may be five times as many or more (U.S. News & World Report, 4/13). In Mexico City alone, two million street vendor workers are abandoned to fend for themselves. As the virus was spreading, liberal president López Obrador showed his loyalty to the bosses' and their businesses by advising workers to "live life as usual" (Guardian, 3/25). Yet, we must fight back. Workers in Haiti and Mexico are leading the way (see page 4 and 5).

South Asia: criminal neglect of public health

For at least a quarter of the world's population, some two2 billion people, physical distancing is a sick joke. In South Asia, there is one nurse for every 10,000 workers. The health infrastructure, however decrepit, is concentrated in cities, yet 66 percent of the region's population lives in rural areas (World Bank).

In India, bosses imposed a lockdown of 1.3 billion people, the largest in history. But they cannot prevent the coming cataclysm created by their blatant neglect of workers' health. They've invested in only 40,000 ventilators, or about 6 percent as many per capita as in the U.S. (Aljazeera.com, 4/2). In a country where caste-based and anti-Muslim violence is routine, there's no escaping racism for Muslim and Dalit workers. Meanwhile, fascist Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed that Covid-19 was not a health emergency while spreading the myth that "the virus was going to be vaporized by the 'reverberations' of mass clapping" (Foreign Policy, 4/10).

In Bangladesh, over 90 percent of workers are in the informal sector. Most families' ability to eat depends on these workers' now evaporated daily wages. Scarce water sources are shared across densely packed households, an ideal environment for a virus.

In Afghanistan, government-distributed hand sanitizers in hospitals "have zero alcohol content." The imperialist-run World Health Organization gave the country 1,500 testing kits, "but only two laboratories…[have] machines that can process the test samples" (The Intercept, 4/2).

Covid-19 will result in worldwide genocide of Black and brown workers. Of all the plagues of capitalism, racism is the most fatal.

Yet, we must fight back.

Kill capitalism or be killed

Capitalism means the racist genocide of our class: rising fascism, liberal misleaders disguised as saviors, and inter-imperialist wars for limited resources (see box). The bosses will respond to this crisis the only way they know: with murderous nationalist competition.

The other choice—for workers, the only choice—is communism. Wherever we are, we must battle the disease of the profit system. Whenever we fight back, we contribute to our international mission of equality everywhere.

Capitalism cannot protect the working class from disease and inequality. Workers need a society run by workers for the health of all, not the profits and power of a few. Only communism, organized by a mass working class led by Progressive Labor Party, could humanely contain a pandemic and ensure survival for the greatest possible number of workers. The international working class needs to build a border-free world. We need a society predicated on science to protect our class, the environment, and the planet that sustains us. Only then will humanity flourish.

Getting rid of capitalism is a matter of life or death! Which side are you on? Join the PLP and fight for workers' power! ✪

Mexico under Covid-19: 'feels like a war zone'

MEXICO, April 9—Under capitalism, workers' health is important as long as they can be exploited. "Workers: you are on your own." That is the bosses' plan of action during this pandemic. Their actions will lead to many preventable deaths from a disease that they refuse to diagnose or from starvation because of the economic devastation. This capitalist system is unfit for the workers and doesn't deserve to exist.

Abandoned healthcare system

After the economic crisis in the 80s, because of the depreciation of its currency due to the nationalization of the banks in 1982, the Mexican government, in order to deal with the crisis, acquired loans with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. One of these loans demanded the dismantling of the State's health services, to implement a system of private health services. Since the 80s, there has been little money put into the healthcare system.

There are 250 abandoned public hospitals. In the last 36 years, deteriorating infrastructure and lack of pro-health policies have lead to an increase in diabetes, heart problems, cancer and more.

Covid-19 unmasks capitalist disregard

Like in other parts of the world, Covid-19 has unmasked the abandonment and inequality of healthcare. While public health care for the masses is nonexistent, healthcare is plenty for who can afford it. The places with the highest number of registered infections are Mexico city, the state of Mexico, Baja California, Sinaloa, Quintana Roo, Puebla and Jalisco.

The health authorities reported 3,181 registered cases of coronavirus and 174 deaths in the first weeks of April, but this is only a representative sample. For each case, there could be eight to 12 more people infected, which means 26,000 cases with Covid-19 (El Universal, 4/8).

Many hospitals are living in this emergency due to the chronic underfunding. In cities like Tijuana and Mexicali in Baja California, the rate

of infection and deaths has grown immensely. Doctors are warning in the next weeks, with the increase in infections, the hospitals will collapse. Note that these two cities have the highest concentration of migrants waiting to cross the border.

Healthcare workers protest for protection

The protests of doctors and nurses throughout the country have not stopped. From Baja California to Chiapas, they are demanding protective equipment so they can treat patients. Scores have rallied in Mexico City.

The Mexican Association of Doctors and Residents of April said that 8 of 10 doctors do not have N95 masks, more than half did not have protective goggles and around 30 percent did not have acrylic masks (El Pais, 4/8). There is also the lack of trained staff to face this emergency. The collapse of hospitals and an increase in deaths was preventable.

With a precarious economy where 54 percent of the working population are in the informal sector and don't have access to social security, the only alternative will be broken public health infrastructure (El Pais, 4/8).

In Mexico City, before the declaration of a national emergency, we had lost 64,000 jobs. and between March 13 and April 6, 346,800 jobs were lost. Also, many workers were forced to accept lower salaries in order to keep their jobs. Many workers who lost their jobs in the formal sector took jobs in supermarkets and delivery services.

AMLO serves big business

If we can see that the working class has been affected the most by this pandemic, so can the labor department. The business coordinating council has requested that the president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) cut their taxes and add money for their sector, so businesses don't go under. AMLO refused, saying that his government prioritizes the needs of the poorest population, and a "rescue" of that magnitude will lead to more loans from the IMF. This liberal misleader's lies knows no bounds. This is the same president that underplayed the pandemic in the first place.

But to be honest, AMLO's strategy is to rely on the businesses that have always supported him: Carlos Slim from Grupo Carso; Alberto Bailleres, BAL; and Germán Larrea, Grupo México, who have gotten land and projects throughout the country (El Pais, 4/8).

PLP serves workers

The PLP here continues to function. We read and share DESAFIO with co-workers online while maintaining relationships with our base. Our strategy to combat this crisis, we must talk to our base, friends, family, co-workers, developing a communist conscience by sharing real information to create our own analysis. CHALLENGE is the tool that help us see experiences from workers around the world and know that we are all living the same experience; that we are one international working class; that the only way we can change the world is building a revolutionary movement to destroy capitalism and build a dictatorship of the working class. ✪

Cuomo, servant of liberal imperialist bosses

New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo has emerged as a national spokesperson for a rational response to the Covid-19 pandemic. But deeds matter more than demeanor. As governor, he gutted the healthcare system and delayed his response to the pandemic. His leadership has led to more deaths in New York than any other state. This was preventable and foreseeable.

But the Wall Street finance capitalists, the imperialist corporations that have a world empire to defend, don't care about workers' lives. They care about building an all-class patriotic unity to confront China and other rivals. Cuomo, and politicians like him, are building a liberal nationalist unity that will serve the imperialist wing of the ruling class in the coming wars. When it comes to defending their worldwide imperialist empire the Big Fascist liberal rulers don't trust a chaotic, self-serving Trump. They prefer someone like Cuomo. Cuomo's burgeoning national popularity is a sneak preview of how the bosses' finance capital main wing will position itself after the Trump disaster to regain control of the state and impose fascism and war on the working class.

But lying politicians promoting this liberal fascism are not the solution. It's the healthcare workers, transit, Amazon, service, delivery, and many others who have gone all out during this crisis. We need a system where these workers run society, not for the capitalists' profits but for the needs of the world's working class. That's communism. That means a revolution where the billionaires and their puppet politicians like Cuomo are out and the working class rules the world.

Response to pandemic: racist and late

On March 1 a woman was the first in New York City to test positive for Covid-19, having recently arrived from Iran. The next day Cuomo promised to track everyone from the woman's flight. It did not happen. The next day a suburban lawyer who worked in Manhattan tested positive. State officials focused their efforts on the suburb, not New York City. Not only was that not very smart, as Cuomo likes to portray himself, it was racist. The focus was on a mainly white enclave, not a mainly Black and Latin city.

"Dr. Frieden [former head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] said that if the state and city had adopted widespread social-distancing measures a week or two earlier, including closing schools, stores and restaurants, then the estimated death toll from the outbreak might have been reduced by 50 to 80 percent" (NYT, 4/8).

Stay-at-home orders were also late in New York State. Cuomo is owned by real estate and construction billionaires and even declared construction workers "essential" until forced to retreat. On March 19, Gavin Newsome issued a statewide shelter-in-place order, though California had only a small fraction of the confirmed cases in New York.

Cuomo said, "We're fighting the virus and we're fighting fear and panic. The fear and panic is, if anything, worse than the virus" (The Today Show, 3/19). Maybe he was talking about the fear and panic of his developer buddies who were terrified about losing profits.

After initially dismissing Mayor Bill De Blasio's call for a shelter-in-place for NYC, Cuomo ordered a statewide lockdown on the evening of March 22. At a time when the number of Covid-19 cases was doubling every two days or so, a delay of three or six days translates to thousands of unnecessary deaths for the sake of capitalist profit.

Pre-pandemic: racist cuts

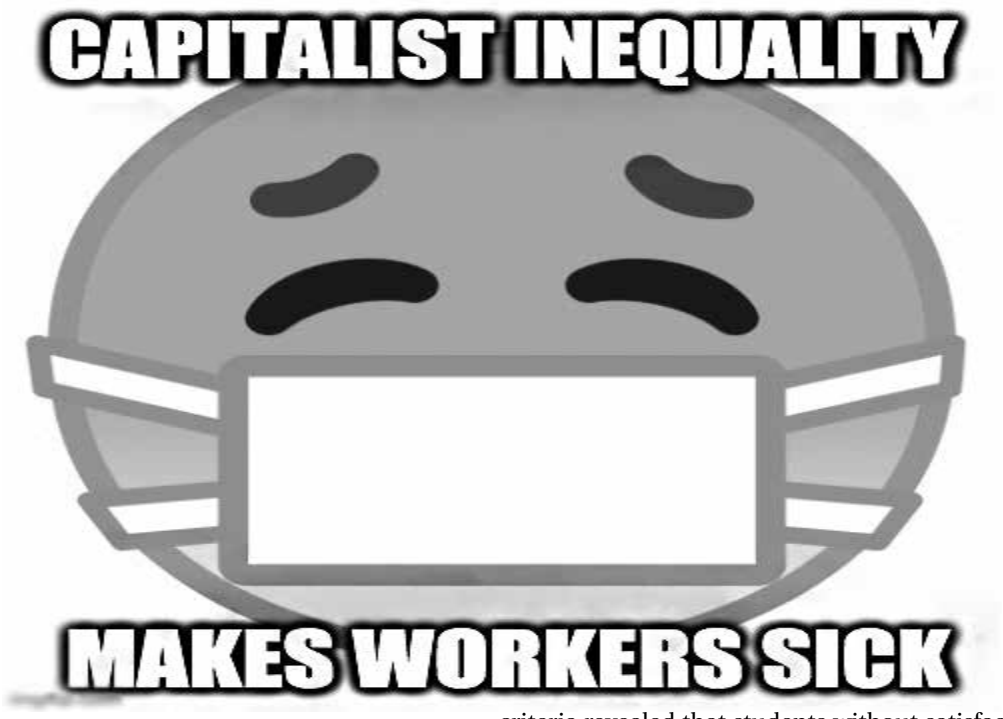
In January 2011 Cuomo started as governor making racist cuts to Medicaid and school aid and used his political skills to protect the wealth of his billionaire donors. During the last 20 years New York State has lost 20,000 hospital beds. Cuomo was governor almost half that time. He personally helped negotiate the closing of Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn and its sale to a real estate developer. He also held back court ordered money to inner city schools that was to reverse some of the racist inequality in state school funding. He also cut funding to localities forcing cuts in health care, housing and education (Gotham Gazette, 1/16).

Meanwhile Cuomo has eliminated a bank tax, has cut taxes on yachts, private jets and mansions and stopped a proposed tax on non-primary apartments (public-accountability.org, 12-4-2019). Now New York faces a total racist collapse of its healthcare system. Desperately ill workers are being turned away from hospitals, many are dying in their homes, and hundreds are being buried "unclaimed" in mass graves in Potter's field. It's criminal, racist murder.

Continued on page 7

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.



The racist conditions of transit

In this time of the Covid-19 pandemic, I want to describe what NYC MTA maintainers are facing at our worksite. In our section, there are over 200 workers. The majority are Black immigrants from the Caribbean, and some other immigrants from Eastern Europe.

In the middle of this pandemic where social distancing has been recommended, the superintendent bosses continued to call meetings daily, which cram over 200 of us into a room. Two months ago, a worker started coughing and they called him into the supervisor's office that sent him to a medical facility for testing. After a period of 10 days, we learned that our co-worker was diagnosed positive with coronavirus. Two other workers who were feeling sick in the shop also later tested positive, as well. Ironically, one of the supervisors who came in contact in the office with the first worker, also got the virus.

Since then, our crew of maintenance workers has basically been on their own. We never see any union shop stewards at the worksite. Many supervisors don't even show up. Subsequently, many other workers in our shop have become ill and confirmed to be infected with the virus. One worker told me he was positive and that he had already passed the virus on to his wife and daughter. The saddest and most difficult news for me was learning that one of our crew died from Covid-19. He was a really good guy and we had always looked out for each other when we worked the track together. After that, we really don't know how many of us have gotten sick and who won't make it. Many of us feel that our shop is a death trap.

We at the MTA are facing life-threatening conditions. At the Long Island Railroad (LIRR), a worker tested positive and they closed the entire shop to make sure everyone else was okay before it was safe to go back. Due to racism we get inferior treatment to our brothers and sisters at the LIRR. It has become clear that the MTA union leadership will not protect us.

Rank and file MTA maintainers need to start organizing together to fight back now. Ultimately, we will need to get rid of this entire racist profit system if we want a world that is safe for us and our families.

★★★★★

Beware the wolf in sheep's clothing

During the Covid 19 Pandemic, the majority of our working students lost their jobs, news comes that City University of New York (CUNY) will address the issue of "food insecurity" for the approximately 1500 students at community colleges who need help. But when the bosses at CUNY and the state appear to help, watch out, because it's sure to disappoint. The liberal misleaders in the City Council tried to look like heros by awarding $400 million to expand the CUNY food pantry services to students facing financial need.

However, a closer look at the eligibility criteria revealed that students without satisfactory GPA requirement, who have less than 9 credits, or who are in graduate programs do not qualify for the food pantry. In 2019, the GAO (Government Accountability Office) released a report about food insecurity in the U.S. According to the report "millions of college students may be going hungry. Knowing this, you can add this sham CUNY food pantry to the long list of attacks on students

Another glaring example of this was when Governor Cuomo offered up the Excelsior Program in 2017, promising there would be" free tuition", but soon it became clear that the vast majority of our students were ineligible despite demonstrating significant financial need.

This shows that when the bosses offer any kind of assistance it always has racist and fascist conditions attached. So while CUNY will decide "who qualifies " to eat, we must do the most and the best we can under these circumstances.

This semester, our student club was planning to show the documentary Hungry to Learn on our campuses. We were making plans to unite with other campuses to fight back around different campaigns.

Progressive Labor Party college students and professors are continuing to reach out to our friends, to discuss the ideas in CHALLENGE. We've been doing everything from making our own masks for each other, to joining the Free CUNY movement, and volunteering to help where we can–but most importantly we want to share in this crucial moment that if we don't kill capitalism it will continue to kill us.

★★★★★

Send a communist care package

Many workers in the U.S. and other countries are being forced to go back to work in the middle of a pandemic, so the almighty engine of the capitalist economy can keep running. More often than not, we are being forced back into service jobs, often overcrowded, with little to any protective equipment to keep us minimally safe from a contagious and deadly virus.

It is overwhelmingly lower-income service workers, especially Black and Latin workers, who are being thrown into these racist and potentially fatal working conditions. Grocery store workers, retail and food service workers, transit and healthcare workers—many times working without any masks or gloves and coming in close proximity to hundreds if not thousands of other workers every shift.

Many workers have refused to let the bosses endanger their lives, and have boldly staged walkouts and strikes; lessons we should all try to learn from and build upon. In our own modest way, comrades in Progressive Labor Party have been finding ways to spread our revolutionary communist ideas to our working-class peers while showing immediate solidarity.

For example, other workers have donated masks and gloves to our collective, which we have in turn used to create "communist care packages" for other workers. We put the gloves in Ziploc bags (the masks are pre-packaged) and we staple custom Party fliers and CHALLENGE to the packaging. We hope to offer basic material assistance to workers on the front lines while we simultaneously offer the type of political ideas that will destroy the capitalist conditions that fuel this crisis.

It is encouraging to see how we as a Party and the working class in general are adapting to this crisis as it unfolds, and pushing the struggle forward. Even in this dangerous and uncertain period, I remain inspired by the capacity of our class to struggle to create a better world.

★★★★★

The Midway Four resist bosses' racist orders

I have been retired for a couple of years but have been maintaining ties with my friends and former coworkers at the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). Recently, four car servicers were given a direct order to clean a train that was contaminated with the coronavirus by a coworker. The Midway Four (as they've now come to be known) refused to clean the train, stating that they did not have the proper equipment or training. The manager said to clean it or go home - so they walked out and went home! Hundreds of bus and train operators, mechanics, trackmen, and janitors have since become aware of the example they have set and support for the initial walkout has grown.

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic the union has lied to us about how many coworkers have tested positive, but through Facebook and phone calls members are letting each other know as much as we can. The next day, when union officials met with the managers and the Midway Four, one of the union officials announced that they had tested positive for Covid-19. All of the managers who were in that room went home with pay and into quarantine. The union officials closed the office, said it would be deep cleaned and they too went into quarantine with pay. BUT the Midway Four were not allowed to go into quarantine with pay and the union has not stepped up to help them.

In a potentially deadly situation like this, the union hacks are showing more of their true colors as workers are being forced to risk their lives. This creates an opportunity for Progressive Labor Party. We continue to sell CHALLENGE and pass out leaflets to transit workers here in Chicago. The struggle over communist ideas is growing here.

★★★★★

How can 16 million jobless become 32 million?

The phony calculators are at it again. The New York Times (4/4) reported government unemployment figures over a 3-week period in March at 16.6 million. But that omits tens of millions of others out of work and/or seeking work.

Previously the Times had reported "the true number of people newly out of work may be much larger." It further reported that since March 28 "it's likely that an additional four million people have lost their jobs. The unemployment offices are so overloaded with claimants and understaffed due to clerks being laid off that millions can't even file. How many? At least several million? In addition, there are at least five million who the Times calls "hidden unemployed," that is, those part-timers who sought but could not find full-time jobs.

Yet there are still other uncounted millions of high school and college graduates who are first-time jobseekers and are hard-pressed to find jobs amid millions being laid off but are not counted as unemployed. And finally, there are those classified as "independent contractors"—like Uber and Lyft drivers—who are ineligible for unemployment benefits, not part of the unemployment figures, "job-losers" whom the Times estimates at 1.5 million. So if one adds all that up, it at least doubles those 16.6 million now out of work. How come? That's capitalism.

★★★★★

Cuomo, a hero for the liberal fascists

Continued from page 5

More racist attacks on workers

During the crisis, he proposed more cuts to Medicaid. He was criticized, as this would cost the state $6.7 billion in federal aid. He didn't back down. He just delayed the cuts of $2.5 billion, including $400 million to hospitals. And he conveniently forgot about rent reform, which many workers fought for.

But he did remember to undo aspects of recently passed bail reform. This would have "allowed people accused of crimes to keep their jobs… instead of suffering in jail … the most dangerous place in America as far as the coronavirus is concerned.

On Wednesday… almost 180 people incarcerated at Rikers and 141 corrections staff were infected with the coronavirus" (Slate , 4/1). Cuomo's proposal would allow judges to revoke bail even for misdemeanor.

The cop leaders were happy. It was probable that incarceration would increase, adding to the jail population and increasing the spread of Covid-19.

Tax breaks for the capitalists

But racist attacks on the working class are only half the story. Then there are massive giveaways

to Cuomo's billionaire friends. One such friend is James Dolan, owner of Madison Square Garden and a big Cuomo donor. MSG has not paid taxes for 37 years. Cuomo has blocked all attempts to stop this giveaway (gothamist.com, 1-22). "New York Gives Corporations More in Tax Breaks Than Any Other State" reads a headline (Gothamist, 4/10/2017). The latest scam was the attempted tax exemption for Amazon and billionaire owner Jeff Bezos. More jobs were promised, but the research says that's false. Corporations reap billions, taxpayers pay, and no extra jobs are created (NY Post, 1/8). That's how capitalism works. The government serves the capitalist class and either scams the working class with lying politicians or attacks the working class with racist cops. It's not an accident that of the New York billionaires that made the Forbes Top 400 list over half are donors to Cuomo's campaigns (public-accountability.org, 12/4/2019).

So it goes in the capitalist USA. If you want a better world, don't rely on politicians. Join the Progressive Labor Party and fight for an egalitarian communist world run by and for the working class.✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Below are excerpts from the capitalist press that might be of use for our readers

NYT=New York Times

GW= Guardian Weekly

Covid-19 deaths: Jim Crow's long-term racist effect

NYT, 4/8 — The coronavirus is infecting and killing Black people in the United States at disproportionately high rates,…highlighting…entrenched inequalities in resources, health and access to care….[causing] devastation in black communities…. African-Americans account for more than half of those who have tested positive and 72 percent of virus-related fatalities in Chicago, even though they make up a little less than a third of the population…. In Illinois, 43 percent of people who have died from the disease and 29 percent of those who have tested positive are African-Americans…[comprising] just 15 percent of the state's population. African-Americans,… in Michigan, represent 40 percent of the deaths in that state…[but] make up 14 percent of the population. In Louisiana, about 70 percent…who have died are black, though only a third of that state's population is….

…The reasons behind the disparities…[are] the result of long-standing structural inequalities….Black Americans disproportionately belong to a portion of the workforce that does not have the luxury of working from home….That places them at high risk for contracting the highly infectious disease in transit or at work….Long-standing inequalities also make African-Americans less likely to be insured and more likely to have existing health conditions and face racial bias that prevents them from getting proper treatment….The effects of government redlining policies that began in the 1930s linger… in segregated neighborhoods that lack job opportunities, stable housing, grocery stores with healthy food and more….

"It's not biological….These existing inequalities…shape the racial inequalities in this pandemic…."

The death toll has been particularly devastating among African-Americans...experience a high level of stress….like exposure to toxins, lack of sleep and racial discrimination [which]…can cause…accelerated aging. The coronavirus is most lethal in people over 65.

Book Review: "Unworthy Republic"

NYT, 3/24 - But for certain passengers, it represented something less glorious and more terrifying….The boats functioned as instruments of American expansion and — for the slaves and indigenous people forced to travel on them — "as floating prisons." The policy known as Indian Removal was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson….Transporting so many people… entailed squeezing them into cramped quarters, where disease proliferated and a burst boiler could scald hundreds to death in an instant….

…This was one episode in a long history of colonial conquest that included waging war and spreading disease….It was a "formal state-administered process," meant to eliminate every native person east of the Mississippi — a systematic expulsion that would later serve as an ignominious model….for the Nazis in Eastern Europe. "The Volga," Hitler announced in 1941, "must be our Mississippi…." …Previously, as a general…Jackson led a brutal campaign against the Creeks and the Seminoles. His election to the highest office in 1828, meant that state governments in the South would get what they had long clamored for — federal resources to move Indigenous residents from the land, so that slaveholders could expand their cotton empire….

…Particularly enticing for slavers was the Black Prairie — a crescent-shaped swath of dark, rich soil through Mississippi and Alabama, where the Chickasaws, Choctaws and Creeks lived…. Northern financiers and Indigenous slave owners…profited from expulsion….For the enormous policy of Indian Removal the federal government ended up spending about $70 million — the equivalent…of about a trillion dollars today….For the native people who were moved… [it] proved to be deadly.

In 1869, after a spate of massacres of Indigenous communities in the West, Frederick told an antislavery audience: "The only reason why the Negro has not been killed off, as the Indians have been, is that he is so close under your arm that you cannot get at him….Expulsion…was the war the slaveholders won."

U.S. unemployment headed to more than 20 million

NYT, 4/10 — The coronavirus outbreak shutting businesses in every state….meant that more than 16 million had been put out of work in just three weeks….

…The actual job losses…are almost certainly greater, and…will continue to mount….

Several economists expect that by the end of the month, more than 20 million people will have been thrown out of work….Unemployment offices have been vastly overpowered by demand. Applicants…say they've made dozens of attempts — even hundreds — to get through online or by telephone. Some have still not succeeded. Kendall Clark…in The Woodlands, Texas, said she had not managed to file despite more than 1,200 attempts, some at 1 a.m…. [Many]…workers… don't normally qualify — like independent contractors, part-timers and recent hires….In Mississippi…just 9 percent of unemployed workers there were eligible to receive any payments.

Tough choices, devastating consequences

Feeding America, 4/12 — Compromises and coping strategies. The median annual income for households served by the Feeding America network is

$9,175. The choices they face due to limited resources:

69% had to choose between food and utilities.

67% had to choose between food and transportation.

66% had to choose between food and medical care.

57% had to choose between food and housing.

31% had to choose between food and education.

79% purchase inexpensive, unhealthy food.

40% water down food or drinks.

35% sell or pawn personal property.

…People who are food insecure are disproportionately affected by diet-sensitive chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure…. For children….not having enough healthy food [is linked to] risk of…asthma and anemia; and behavioral problems like hyperactivity, anxiety and aggression in school-age children.

COVID-19 LAYS BARE RACISM OF CAPITALIST EDUCATION

After a month of school closures due to Covid-19, capitalist education is increasingly exposed as an exercise in racist neglect, where sowing obedience and using grades to sort our children into 'winners and losers' are the goals, not learning.

Students, parents and education workers today must reject this regime of schooling. Now is the time to provide the youth of the working class with an emancipatory and class-conscious education. Communist teachers in Progressive Labor Party (PLP) are fighting to be at the forefront of such an effort.

Across all subject areas let's fight for an understanding of this crisis through a more class-conscious program of science, math, history and language so that our young people and their families can see by our example that only we, the working class, hold the key to a healthier future – communism.

The response of the bosses' school systems to Covid-19 is a mounting racist disaster. Segregation and imperialism funnel the worst attacks toward the most exploited members of our class. By March 4, schools in 188 countries were closed, impacting 1.5 billion students (Washington Post, 4/6), over 90 percent of the world's students.

The lost time and learning that working class youth are suffering will never be made up. Like those uncounted dying at home in NYC (NYT, 4/10), the losses suffered by the children of our class will never be fully accounted for. Worldwide, many of our class brothers and sisters who are refugees and internally displaced persons (especially teenage girls who attend school at lower rates than boys) will never return to school (UNESCO.org, 4/10).

Even as their education system, like their health care system has collapsed, the bosses still seek to sort children into categories that will shape their lives. In a survey of education bosses from 84 countries, 22 replied that their educational systems were moving forward with high-stakes exams as planned, while 11 canceled them and 23 moved forward with modified/online versions. Population sorting remains an essential function of capitalist schooling.

Bosses abandon working class children

In the Los Angeles Unified School District schools were closed with no provision made for any type of distance learning to be put in place, and PLP is organizing teachers to serve the working class in the face of the bosses' racist neglect.

Instead of figuring out how to give each student a chance to learn, the ruling class in Philadelphia cynically cancelled distance learning citing 'equity concerns' (Philadelphia Tribune, 3/18). Posing as anti-racists, liberal school bosses in Boston and the Seattle area have made similar racist decisions (Time, 3/15), cutting off access which disproportionately affect working class youth .

In New York City, the viral epicenter of decaying U.S. capitalism, the ruling class has adopted a program of laptop distribution and shipment of iPads by mail but only AFTER leaving the schools open so long that known viral hotspots developed in school buildings across the city (Gothamist.com, 3/29). A determined cover-up of the spread of Covid-19 in schools is underway. Meanwhile, the technology shipment has failed to reach some 240,000 students (DeBlasio press conference, 4/11). Since closure we have seen anti-student principals pressure teachers to simply pump out assignments, while making ZERO effort to see how students are actually doing during this crisis. All teachers, especially newer teachers with fewer job protections, must turn to the working class by reaching out to students and parents to ensure that schoolwork does not become a new source of oppression and stress.

The bosses failed system tries to shift blame to parents

The vast majority of our students are Black and Latin youth. A survey generated by PLP teachers shows that their obligations to care for younger siblings have grown, that many live-in cramped apartments and take turns on a single laptop over weak internet service with no good quiet place to work. A provider's job loss haunts nearly half our students, while the other half with a parent still working endure the stress of seeing their mother or father leave home and risk exposure daily in order to earn their pay.

Assignments related to what is happening all around us and which point to ways students, parents and teachers can fight our way through this crisis together will help all of us.

High school student engagement with distance learning in NYC has declined every week, reflecting mass discontent with canned lessons not relevant to the urgent problems of the present. For younger students stuck at home, the situation is no better. Workers must reject hollow calls for 'parent accountability' for distance learning which is divorced from reality as millions of jobs evaporate and the remaining ones become virus-plagued death traps.

The working class can educate our children

Class-conscious education workers and parents must fight for the attention of every young mind and focus youth inquiry on using language, science, history and math to discover the truth about how capitalism brought the Covid-19 crisis into being and how ruling classes will resort to intensified fascism in the response they cobble together, while loved ones grow sick and die all around us.

As ruling classes squabble over which working class lives matter and which do not, students, parents and teachers must hold fast to the only political program which makes the survival of the international working class the only priority – communist revolution. "Red Medicine: Socialized Health Care in Soviet Russia" is available online and provides a glimpse of the kinds of advances in health care and education that are possible when the working class holds power. We see health care and education being organized in an anti-sexist way where the well-being of every single worker and child comes first. Readings from this 1933 book and discussion questions for distance learning and study group use will be posted on the PLP website in the coming period.

We call on education workers and parents drafted into the work of educating their children at home to send to Challenge all lessons that build a materialist understanding of Covid-19. The bosses' media reeks of the stench of the profit system and many workers have the good sense to keep it at arms-length. Yet our class cannot be left at the mercy of superstition and rumor which fill the gap in the search for answers. ✪

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